

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

LTC#

301-2012

LETTER TO COMMISSION

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TO:

Mayor Matti Herrera Bower and Members of the City Commission

FROM:

Kathie G. Brooks, Interim City Manager

DATE:

November 26, 2012

SUBJECT: SAFETY CONCERNS ON FIRST STREET - RESPONSE

Recently, members of the Mayor and City Commission were contacted by residents of the Courts at South Beach, located on First Street between Alton Road and Washington Avenue, regarding the following issues on the eastbound lane of First Street which are largely related to the construction projects currently being performed in the area. The concerns raised are as follows:

- Safety concerns such as, outage of street lights and requests for additional police presence.
- Queuing of vehicles on the eastbound lane of First Street between Washington Avenue and Alton Road.
- Valet parking operations at two restaurants on the block (Fogo de Chao and Milos) exacerbating
  congestion and queuing issues, including significant delays for the passage of emergency
  vehicles eastbound on First Street.
- Overall traffic congestion in the area and related noise from car horns.

The construction projects in the area include:

## Wastewater Force Main Project (Miami-Dade County):

The County is currently constructing a new wastewater force main on Commerce Street and on Washington Avenue between Commerce Street and South Pointe Park. Due to the County's work, the intersection of South Pointe Drive and Washington Avenue is currently closed. It is anticipated that this intersection will be re-opened by December 14<sup>th</sup>. This phase of the project impacting City streets will be substantially completed by the end of the year. A second contractor is now working within South Pointe Park, this work is scheduled to be completed in July and the Park is scheduled to reopen in August 2013. The final phase to make the final connection of the new force main to the existing force main on Alton Road will be constructed in the summer of 2013.

## South Pointe Phase III, IV and V Neighborhood Right of Way Infrastructure Improvement Project

The project scope of work includes the installation of new stormwater infrastructure including, gravity wells, stormwater structures and a pump station; streetscape improvements including roadway reconstruction; traffic calming measures; enhanced pedestrian access; crosswalks; irrigation and landscaping; pedestrian lighting; parking; signage and pavement markings throughout the project limits; the installation of an 8-inch water main on Alton Road, Commerce, Biscayne, Collins, and Ocean Courts; and a 12-inch water main on Ocean Drive, added on July 18, 2012 by the City Commission. The Project is scheduled to be substantially completed during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2013.

As referenced above, these construction projects have caused increased traffic volume on First Street and in particular to the eastbound lane between Alton Road and Washington Avenue. The Courts at South Beach Homeowners Association (CSBHOA) has reached out to several members of the City Commission and City staff outlining their concerns and seeking relief. As a result, the following actions were taken as of Friday, November 2, 2012, to address these concerns:

- The parking meters on the north side of the eastbound lane of First Street, between Jefferson Avenue and Washington Avenue are reserved (bagged), except for the six (6) spaces east of Jefferson Avenue. This parking lane serves as a passing lane to alleviate queuing on First Street.
- The valet parking stands for the two restaurants on the block have each been relocated, one
  to the south side of First Street between Alton Road and Jefferson Avenue and the other to
  Washington Avenue, south of First Street. This was done in order to minimize traffic
  congestion/delays, while still providing valet service within a reasonable proximity.
- A Variable Message Sign (VMS) providing notice of "Traffic Delays and "NO HORNS" was installed on the eastbound lane of First Street at the corner of Jefferson Avenue.
- The contractor has restored power to the temporary and existing lighting systems throughout the project limits. It is important to note that over the past several months, temporary light poles have been hit by large vehicles, cranes, garbage trucks, etc., or damaged in traffic accidents. When these emergencies occurred, the electrical contractor has mobilized immediately to restore the lighting system. The permanent lighting system is scheduled to be complete in March 2013.

Although the Courts on South Beach HOA supported all of the actions mentioned above, on Friday, November 2, 2012, concerns were raised by affected businesses and members of SOFNA (South of Fifth Neighborhood Association) regarding the reduction of parking inventory in the area and the lack of timely notice of this action that was provided to the neighborhood. Timely notice to the neighborhood was an oversight and has since been corrected. Representatives from various City departments, including Parking, Police, Code Enforcement and the City Manager's Office have met and will continue to communicate with all stakeholders. In regards to the reduction of parking inventory, this was addressed by reducing the temporary traffic lane and returning a segment of the bagged meters for public parking on weekdays. In order to address the peak traffic congestion periods, the temporary traffic lane is utilized on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. If it is determined that additional days are warranted, stakeholders will be notified prior to any action. SOFNA indicated that they may convene a community meeting to discuss this particular issue further. If so, I will ensure that the appropriate City staff members attend.

As a result of the aforementioned meetings held with the stakeholders, the following actions were instituted during the weekend beginning on Friday, November 9<sup>th</sup> and will continue to remain in place each weekend until the street closures in the area are reopened to vehicular traffic, which is anticipated to be by the end of this month:

- The six metered spaces east of Jefferson Avenue shall also be bagged every weekend, including this weekend through Monday, to extend the passing [travel] lane further west.
- A [second] VMS has been installed on southbound Alton Road south of 4<sup>th</sup> Street advising, "Detour to Washington Avenue – Left at 2<sup>nd</sup> Street". This was done in order to reduce potential vehicular traffic on First Street.
- The Police Department will be conducting traffic control at the intersection of Washington Avenue and First Street during peak demand periods through the weekend.

- The Parking Department has assigned an officer to monitor First Street to ensure the reserved parking lane is clear at all times, monitor and address traffic/congestion to preempt noise (car horns); and monitor and enforce the valet parking operations in the area.
- Code Enforcement has increased their patrols and monitoring of the area to address noise and other violations.

The results of the aforementioned actions were very effective, as there was a marked improvement in traffic flow on First Street and as a result, there has been a reduction in noise complaints, including car horns. This plan shall remain in effect and we will continue to monitor the area and make adjustments accordingly, of course, with stakeholder input.

If you should have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Saul Frances, Parking Director, at extension 6483.

C: Jorge Gomez, Assistant City Manager
Patricia Walker, Chief Financial Officer
Max Sklar, Acting Assistant City Manager
Fred Beckmann, Public Works Director
Fernando Vazquez, CIP Director
Raymond Martinez, Chief of Police
Stephen Scott, Building Director
Saul Frances, Parking Director

KGB/PDW/SF/FB/FV